

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK

April 26 & 27, 2007
DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK BOARD ROOM
HELENA, MONTANA

April 26, 2007

Department of Livestock Board Room

Executive Session

The Board of Livestock went immediately into an Executive session for interviews of State Veterinarian applicants.

Personal right to privacy exceeds the public right to know.

April 27, 2007

Department of Livestock Conference Room

Executive Session

Executive Session was continued with interviews.

Personal right to privacy exceeds the public right to know.

11:30 Lunch Working Session

Chairman Bill Hedstrom called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Attendance:

Board of Livestock

Bill Hedstrom, Meg Smith, Linda Nielsen, Janice French, Rebecca Weed, and Stan Boone. George Hammond was an excused absence.

Department Personnel

George Harris, Acting Executive Officer/ Centralized Services Administrator; Marty Clark, Brand Enforcement Assistant Administrator; Dr. Jeanne Rankin, Acting State Veterinarian, Animal Health; Rob Tierney, Bison Management; and Sherry Rust, Executive Secretary.

Public

Ariel Overstreet, Agri-News; Bill Myers, producer; John Bloomquist, attorney; Steve Pilcher, producer; Jay Bodner, MSGA; Dr Marty Zaluski, veterinarian.

Bison Management Update

Rob Tierney began the meeting with an update on location and numbers of bison out of the park on private property. He estimated that between seven hundred and a thousand bison were currently out. Ongoing strategic hazing has been largely unsuccessful. Department personnel have made every attempt to keep bison off of private property. Some areas are very hard to work with horses - small acreages, fences, etc. Use of the helicopter is discouraged, but in difficult areas such as the South Fork, it might be necessary to clean up the landscape.

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He said cattle will be coming onto private property beginning as early as June 10. Munns indicated if the sale of their property does not go through they will bring in cattle by the 15th; Povah's have a 15th target date also. Munns fences are down, bison are calving all over on private property. It is imperative to move those animals back into the park.

The current plan is to go the way of past years and push them back into the park, (about five to seven hundred head). The push will start Tuesday using horses, ATV's, pick ups, and people on foot. Will first try to do without the helicopter and only call it in if necessary. The agencies will coordinate with department personnel, two or three from FWP, and at least two YNP staff plus Sheriff Office and Highway Patrol staff for traffic control. He said we cannot haze on the weekends, too much traffic, public safety issues. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday work best, then watching to see how many stick. Park personnel are considering allowing the bison to be hazed further into the park to facilitate finding greened up grass. Rob estimates it will take about two days to clear the landscape beginning on May 1.

Dr. Rankin said there is brucellosis exposure with the bison calving on private property.

Suggested managers consider a change in the adaptive document with an April 1 deadline so no animals are calving when hazed. Possible infection period last about 30 days depending on weather conditions. She said we cannot capture and slaughter or vaccinate this time of the year so primarily must rely on risk management. Using as soft approach as possible we should move into regular hazing now, pushing them back to prevent further calving on state property. Rob said the agency staff work well together, will leave a momma and new calf to be picked up the next day. Unmanageable and/or unhazable bison (usually old bulls) will be captured and removed whenever possible as opposed to lethal methods.

The board concurred with and supported the acting state veterinarian in returning to regular hazing and pushing the animals back as quickly as possible. The board also agreed to a press release on Wednesday May 3 citing concerns with public safety and crowd control

Opportunity for Public Comment

Public comment centered on:

- urging the Board of Livestock to implement all the IBMP or it will fail;
- thanked the board for taking a stand on this issue; and
- questions regarding federal funding issues.

Adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

BILL HEDSTROM, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF LIVESTOCK